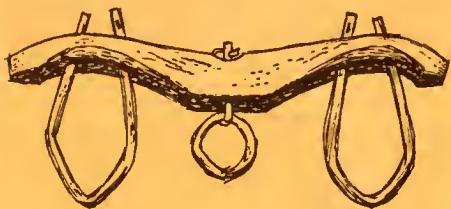




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Abraham Lincoln

A POETICAL INTERPRETATION

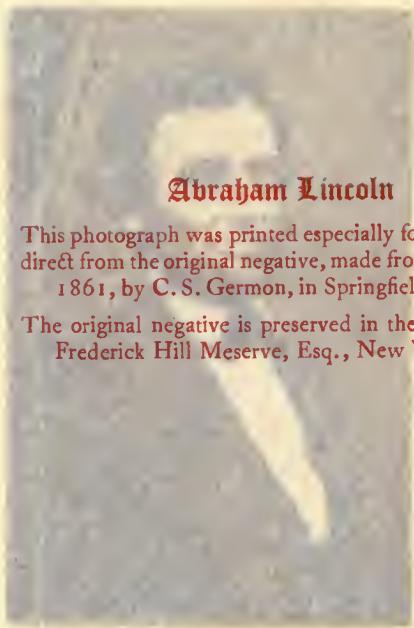
Abraham Lincoln

BY

George William Bell, Jr., M.D.
1881, by C. S. Garrison, in Springfield, Illinois
This biography was prepared especially for this volume
of the "Great American Authors" series, and is
intended to be a companion volume to the "Life of Abraham Lincoln".



PRIVately PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR BY
THE ARTHUR H. CLARK COMPANY
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Abraham Lincoln

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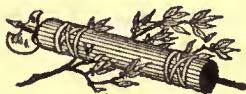
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Abraham Lincoln

A POETICAL INTERPRETATION

BY

George William Bell, Ph.D.



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To my parents
James S. and Mary E. Bell
highest exemplars of
true fatherhood and motherhood

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Foreword

The truth of life with its reaches of sentiment and romance presents to man his most fascinating and eternal problem. To reconcile this pervasive romance in a nation's history with the demands of modern scholarship is neither an easy nor always a desirable undertaking; and the attempted reconciliation too often discloses the scholar without imagination. Still we are passing along a way, wherein the sensitive imagination is being intelligently informed. Facts have their romance as well as hearsay and tradition. One need not move outside the material and spiritual circle of any simple and sincere life to meet with the most sublime thoughts and highest ideals of the thinker and poet.

Remarkable have been the achievements of historical and scientific scholarship in the last few decades, suggesting a field of vision to the poet-prophet or affording an opportunity to the poet-interpreter; and as he draws nigh unto his facts, his vision strengthens and he reads the human heart as one inspired. There is ethical significance here for both the poet and the race. There is an immediacy of environment playing upon every life inhering in the very truth of that life. Here lies the common

Foreword

meeting-ground for poet and scholar, giving us the judgment of truth touched in colors of flesh and blood.

The recent researches of Mrs. Caroline Hanks Hitchcock, and Messrs. Howard, Learned, Lea, and Hutchinson have been of inestimable value in providing the way for silencing those who would throw a cloud over the reputation of Nancy Hanks, beloved mother of Abraham Lincoln. To Lea and Hutchinson, especially, are we indebted for establishing the chain of Lincoln descent back into the sixteenth century, and proving to a reasonable degree of certainty that the Lincolns, even the much scorned father of the president, have always been among the first of their equals.

Nancy Hanks Lincoln, the mother of the president, was born February 5, 1784, and died October 15, 1818, at the age of thirty-four. Within those few years were compressed much of early happiness and some sorrow—for Nancy was orphaned at nine years of age; something in the home of her guardian, Aunt Lucy Shipley Berry, of a joyous and intelligent leadership among her young companions, until she was fairly wooed and won by the industrious young carpenter, Thomas Lincoln; something of the experiences of a married life of simple joy, for she loved her husband and their three children, of whom two lived to be trained and instructed by her in the great and good things of life; and finally, something of the common trials and suffer-

Foreword

ings of the wife on the frontier of civilization, passing to an early death.

The mystery of life is the law of its continuance—the forgetting and the remembering, the sinking down and the rising up, the shaping of life upon life. We cannot account for the meanest specimen of mankind without entering the laboratory of the mystic, and we shall never explain this Abraham Lincoln by the historic method alone. The influences that moulded the future leader of his race were subtle and varied; but we may be certain that the influence of his mother transcended any other. He himself has said, "All that I am or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother;" and we are slowly realizing that our president was even more of a Hanks, than a Lincoln, as his features and mental characteristics reveal. His wonderful tenderness and humanity and his humor are the pervading characteristics that came to him from his mother's line. His sturdy honesty, his high sense of duty and his capacity for suffering seem to be the elements, peculiarly Lincoln, in his personality.

The union of the Lincoln and Hanks families brought together two forces of eminent respectability in their ranges of living. In the persons of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, we have—a man, who amidst a series of the most tragic happenings of a frontier life, proves himself capable of sustaining an unwearying contest—a woman who is above the average of her class in every way, yet

Foreword

so gentle and intelligent as to win all as friends, one capable of sacrificing for the good of her family whatever was necessary of her own life. There can be no rhetorical exaggeration in placing the name of Nancy Hanks beside that of her martyred son. The early death of this estimable woman gave to Lincoln an ever ennobling memory but removed from his daily presence a practical influence that would have meant much to the unconscious refinement of a noble human soul. As we link together the names of Washington and Lincoln, let us also place beside them the names of the two women who were so much to them—Martha Washington and Nancy Hanks—the wife and the mother.

GEORGE WILLIAM BELL.

Stoneham, Mass., February, 1913.

Part one
The Shaping Current

The Lifting of the Veil-1

Hail, mind of to-day, that with its spirit
Relights the dimming glow of cycles past
And fans to radiant brightness, darkest pit
That through long ages was not—an outcast!
That gropes with monumental patience, lest
Some valued and unsung memorial
Of ancient greatness keep its unknown rest,
And bear its part in silence—mystical!
To find, and to creatively affirm
The human stepping of the sons of God
Towards that inevitable, final term,
Where man no more sees service 'neath the rod.
The physical endurance of a noble past
Unveils but slowly its heroic might,
Yet lights up in the glowing mind, at last
A wondering tenderness for sorrow's night.
The pre-historic days, the ancient world,
The ferment born of time long since unfurled;
Have passed in some degree, will pass far more
Into the life that ventures to restore.

The Lifting of the Veil-2

And restoration is the art of arts—

To build again the thought and deed of those
Who in creation's early days made charts

And evolved principles that slowly rose
In elemental greatness—this the task—

To reconstruct a life and time that bore
Eternal freshness and a will to ask

Its God for signs and symbols to explore.
Life is a whole, time but the agent strong,

Stripping the fetters binding to the earth;
There is no first, no last, nor right nor wrong

That in itself is absolute, has worth;
To-day is just as great as yesterday,

The victory and truth still unrevealed,
'Twill be the greater when the ancient way,
In re-creations, bears its will unsealed.

The reason's process through the straining years
Evokes the heart's great tumult and its tears;
And guides the master passion, through its light,
To dissipate the darkness of the night.

The Freeing of the Spirit-1

To send anew the Word, heard, but unknown,
 To ever glow with brilliance, pure, serene,
To light the beacons o'er the tombs, moss-grown,
 Doth verify a purpose, felt, not seen ;
Significance of soul present in One
 Doth glorify unto an age its fruit,
And in the heart of man there has begun
 Acknowledgment of Law—as absolute :
The law that finds its voice in one, then all,
 In leader, then in people to be led,
Seeks of the loyal individual
 Some service to all living—from all dead.
A Moses, Socrates, world-spirits these,
 A Charlemagne, a Luther, and Cromwell,
Lean towards the higher law, and raise o'er seas
 And lands, the emblems of truth's citadel.
Life's unit is the individual soul,
 Encased or free, on voyage to some goal ;
The world glows not but as the unit glows,
 Each trail of glory, glory fresh bestows.

The Freeing of the Spirit-2

The sunlight of intelligence darts back
Afar, whose rays destroy the atmosphere
Of superstition, nightmares that do wrack
 Man's peace to terrorize his life with fear;
And a Columbus steers his course due West
 To find a land whose bosom yields the hope
To millions toiling in their homes, unblessed,
 Of freedom, and the right to live, not grope.
Courageous voyager, sailing the main
 Of an uncharted sea, seeking to spell
In letters bold, the mystic path, to gain
 Anew, man's right as ocean's sentinel:
Thy followers, Vespuccius, Cabot, Drake,
 Champlain, La Salle, Balboa, and Marquette,
Remade thy glory and served to awake
 The sleeping earth that would thy names forget.
The world looks for a sign but sees it when –
 The years have raised it with the blood of men,
Those fearless wanderers who've found new lands
 Died for a future that with praise expands.

The Coming of the Races-1

America—thy eastern shores received
The human floods that swept their lines afar,
And gave thy rolling acres—well achieved—
Unto a world-task pointed by God's star.
O'er hill and plain and mountain spread the host,
Breaking the chains of empire and anew
As a Republic, stretched from coast to coast,
Sped liberty and freedom as man's due.
The conquering of a continent—for use—
Its untrod labyrinths op'ed and explored,
Its timber felled, its surface tilled, excuse
Enough for taking from a race abhorred
Through dark and bloody cruelties unmatched,
That land, a hunting ground, a haunt of beasts—
Some day the home of millions unattached
To old world privileges, to lords and priests.
All Europe feels her title in this land
Whose children found these shores, met first demand
Imperative for blood, and later spread
Her life, her thoughts, wherever pathways led.

The Coming of the Races-2

As in each life, life's discipline flows from
Repeated tasks, so conquest marks its pace
From east to west, to constantly o'ercome
Tide-water east, which fights the march of race.
Each step seems by the older most opposed,
And national vision comes first to the west;
Yet rests that vision with its truth disclosed,
Upon a government stable, the best:
And oft as the expanding forces move
Across the mountains, down the rivers' flight,
They pause to settle and their rights to prove
Against a nation's whettingen appetite;
Till in the passing years, 'mid struggles grim,
A whole land sees with kindlier eyes, the soil
As home of man, productive synonym
For happiness, the right to live and toil.
The Revolution was the first advance,
The goal is reached but when the wide expanse
From shore to shore a common purpose sings,
Of people's rights, not selfish rule of kings.

The Welding of the Parts-1

The nation's pathway to its time of peace
Lies over seas of blood, through years of storm;
Its course uncertain, bending at caprice
Of party, section, to its dream perform.
The right to occupy, to cultivate
The land once taken from the Indian brave,
Gave us our homes, yet fostered bitterest hate
In that proud race, acts that it ne'er forgave.
The right to independence, in our rule
Of home affairs, in customs and in law,
Brought on a strife, worthy of ridicule
In part, in vaster part inspiring all.
The right to freedom and to liberty,
To strive and meet the urge of every soul;
The right of nation to its destiny,
Found answer in the battle's grim control.
These are the acts of an ambitious race
Seeking its way, yet careless of its pace;
Brave and in purpose righteous but aware
Too seldom, of the dangers that ensnare.

The Welding of the Parts-2

And in the wake of conquest came that scheme,
Our government, that man, our Washington.
A nation, raised to greatness, saw its dream
Unfolding mightily, the battle won.
In Washington, there was the harmony
Of spirit, product of no single age
Yet seeming like some vast reality
Uplifting all the land, at every stage:
In Hamilton, the genius of the mind
Sought to preserve the fabric of our plan,
Whose services and brilliance could not blind
The nation to his hostile views of man.
In Jefferson the people felt their own
Will rising to the forefront in the fight,
While upland Jackson made that will full grown,
Yet needing Lincoln to our land unite.
This country leans to leadership in part,
A leadership that teaches of the heart;
It needs its men of genius, thinkers bold,
To raise its future earthworks, and to hold.

Part two
The Unending Toil

LINCOLN'S FIRST OFFICIAL UTTERANCE

We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

LINCOLN'S LAST PUBLIC EXPRESSION

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

Ancestral Tracings

Ancestral blendings of our Lincoln raised
That giant mould of form and brain, the quest
With ever wearying stress of times that crazed,
To keep, and bring to fainting nation, rest.
From out the life of England's wealth, there passed
A glory to New England's rocky coast
That in new forms and freer, did at last
Trek to the South and West—a fertile host.
The Anglo-Saxon Lincoln blood runs pure
Throughout its English, Northern, Southern course,
Harking to-day of Shakespere's mighty lure
Of fame immortal, did it wield its force.
The first among their equals, Lincolns moved
From times long gone to fateful end of care;
His race and Nancy's own have ever proved
The value of the virtues born to dare.
Our nation strikes its roots in other lands,
Forming a tie that sympathy commands:
To rear aloft a new race, a new man,
Fairer in promise, nobler in his plan.

Personal Inheritances

True Puritan, thy soul in moral zeal,
True Southern in its warmth and sympathy,
True Western most in vision, makes men feel
 The ties of daily human chivalry.
Thy mother's sway artistic, in thy blood,
 Lifted thy moral nature far beyond
The sphere of narrow practice, and its flood
 Of dogma that does break, makes men despond,
To regions where the mind and heart do leap
 Together in the framing of an act;
To heights where vision falters not to keep
 The way of truth, with wisdom to attract.
Thy father's worth to thee was honesty
 His tragic life failed utterly to kill;
Those hardships borne with courage fashioned thee
 To know the test, and breast it with firm will.
The blending family stocks richly prevail
 In weaving wondrous human fabrics, frail,
And shimmering with the life pulse all aflame,
 Creation's document for time to claim.

Home Influences

How deeply has the heart of womankind
 Enveloped earth with love's sweet mystery!
How marvelously its purer soul, entwined
 With baser things, thrilled life's humanity!
How brightly has the lowly cottage shone
 With all the treasures of a fruitful love,
E'en when the cottage boasts of love alone
 A holy incense radiates above!
This lowly cottage in the fair South-land
 Was nurturing soil at birth, and in his youth,
Storing a soul, impelled by high command,
 With common wisdom leading unto truth.
The home, the forest, solitude of woods,
 Raised deep within his nature—sympathies;
The books with thoughts and deeds, seemed brotherhoods,
 Framing their themes for future melodies.
The sainted memories of childhood days
 Plead sympathetically for better ways;
Spin daily texts in weaving of life-plans,
 Rounding life's arch, all beauteous in its spans.

The Call and the Vision

The simple round of tasks filling the hours
Of those who swiftly follow in the wake
Of pioneers, may lend undreamed of powers
For making real, great visions as they break.
The merging of his youth in manhood's task,
As Lincoln passed to forum of debate,
Marked well the dawning insight, that the mask
Of folly on the face of truth, bred hate.
His call was of the deep unto the deep,
With vision flashing out as nature's torch,
Saw prejudice, the spectre, then o'erleap
Man's reason and o'erthrew the national arch.
He mastered principles that gripped the age.
He saw beneath the coating of all form
The monster slavery, our heritage
From out the past, a curse presaging storm.
The guilt of slavery first was borne by all,
Though later woe on South did heaviest fall;
The economic law first mastered right,
And then by right was conquered in grim fight.

The Law and its Voice

We never know the hour, the day, the year,
When God sees fit to place his rarest seal
Of prescient truth, upon a life career,
To evermore His purposes reveal.
A backwoodsman uncouth, untrained, unknown,
A fact athwart the theories of time,
Stands forth in homely garb, his challenge thrown,
Speaking the law that knows no race nor clime.
A law that is eternal in its will,
Biding no weakly turning from its sway,
That calls upon mankind to heed, fulfil,
Lest human bondage bring some vast decay.
Enkindling law that stirs the common heart
And mind to practise larger, nobler ends,
Yet uttered by this man with simple art,
Pleads for a practise that with mercy blends.
The ripening wisdom of a mind unslaved
By temper's prejudice, heart undraped,
Marshals an eloquence, recruiting trust,
Prophetic of a day more fair, more just.

The Voice becomes National

The heavy hanging of storm-laden clouds,

Wrapping the earth in gloom of sternest doubt,
The signs and wonders playing 'midst the crowds,
Helped sentiment, staid reason's choice to rout.
The voice of reason and the scholar's hope

United in the leader of the cause

Of human rights, whose wisdom would not grope

In darkness, at the breaking of the laws;
But sentiment chose Lincoln as its voice,
And sternly negatived the pride of place,
With its ambitions and its selfish choice
Of hard inhuman methods that debase.

A nation brave in heart, yet bound in fear,

Dreads issue pressing madly to the fore;
It weeps and shudders, halts, while falling tear
Of shame reveals the heart protesting sore.

The ways of Seward had been tried—had failed
But to arouse the passions, time bewailed:
The ways of Douglas could no longer guide
The moral-swinging nation o'er the tide.

Weakness and Strength

The nation's chief felt first the strain of grief

That lay behind the gleam-war's panoply-

Ah, could the land have known its mighty chief,

Its trust must soon have lessened enmity.

The rendering of the ballot cleared the mist

And bared the crevise 'neath the foot of man;

No longer lashing tongue, but mailed fist

Seemed to the Southern section, Lincoln's plan.

The radicals at last had reached their own;

But all unknowingly a king chose they

Of men, whose power might then have strewn

Good-will upon this earth, and brought delay,

Had not obsession seized the nation's mind,

Both North and South, and blood of tumult beat

Victorious o'er a pathway peace-designed:

And Lincoln knew the sorrow of defeat.

O mighty nation, bred to great ideas,

To freedom's way and not to old world fears;

Yet once again needing the patriot's deeds

To save the land when statemanship stampedes.

National Ills

The nation's blood tumultuous, now must dye
The fruitful earth with mark of crimson stain,
And strew its fields with dead, to pacify
An age of conscience, stumbling to explain.
Alas that carnage should prove arbiter
For issues that our minds failed to control!
Alas that war should prove artificer
Of national edifice, and crimes condole!
The mounting hopes of man in government
Becloud themselves with theories unreal,
And seek, sometimes, to thwart a nation's bent
By rashly overlooking time's stern deal:
As oft and even more a part withdraws
In selfish eagerness to press its own
Advantage, 'gainst the wisdom of the laws
That guide the whole, through binding national tone.
Man's savagery creeps forth at times to show
How much we lean for aid on things below,
Yet joyful comedy gives man's estate,
Dark tragedies reveal what comes too late.

The Major and the Minor

Fallen the rights of man with nation's fall,
Crushing the age-long hopes beneath despair,
Had he, we trusted, failed to lift his call
To task of Union-saving as his share.
The Federal power supreme, our liberty,
Lay trembling at the edge of frenzied might;
Not first was smiting down of slavery,
Though primal cause of nation's darkening night.
The Federal power supreme—that shaping cone
Of just efficiency in government
That more and more must be, its base, its throne,
Converging to its crown magnificent—
With peak alone must tower to the sky
Inviting to an outlook, single, true;
While all the framing elements may try
To add a varied glory to the view.
In passion's time a lowly wisdom fights
But haltingly against life wasting spites;
Yet, in its steady flame hope lingers still,
Till fury, sated, yields its outworn will.

The vicarius Sacrifice

The fast approaching Juggernaut of War

Seemed destined to ride ruthless o'er the land,
Crushing the hearts and deafening with its roar,

Till dead and dying equalled fell demand.

There fire and battle's smoke from woods to shore,

There curse of men charging to life's last stand,
Then groans and shrieks of dying, corps on corps,

Then marching armies hurling torch and brand.

Brave brother with brave brother madly fought,

While mountains smoked and rivers changed their hue,
And deeds of valor have forever wrought

Courageous purpose to one national view.

The world seems oft to pass beneath the cross

And offer up its best to venture on;

'Tis certain that the world knows not its loss,

Else grimdest vestments of its grief would don.

War is the cure of kings, of potentates,

The lust of power, its note reverberates;

Sometimes a nation, reason ruled, resigns

Its master, and to maddening war inclines.

The Burden and the Faith

When in those days lives spent themselves as dust,
And God of shelter seemed no longer aid;
A murmuring nation rose then to distrust
Its Lincoln, poured forth bitter, cruel tirade.
To read into those hardening facts of war,
To see through all the killing of that time,
The overflowing mercy, so much more,
The culminating purpose, all sublime.
These burdens etched the furrows on his face,
And stooped his form beneath stern duty's drill;
These gave unto his look its noble grace,
Voicing e'en then and evermore God's will.
But Lincoln held the faith a nation lacked
And suffered not the vision to depart,
However grievously the burden racked
Or clamorously assailed each murmuring dart.
The elemental strength of Lincoln lay
In merging joy with sorrow through his day;
In those excursions of the soul, that sift
Life's nearness, making room for thoughts that lift.

The higher Humanity

In nobleness of heart thou had'st few peers

Among the great of earth, whose names we praise;
Thy mighty daily tasks stayed not the tears

Falling for aching hearts, through time's delays.
Thy listening ear God's gracious message heard,

Seeking to voice its accents wave on wave;
The wisdom of thy heart there ministered

Till thy humanity reached to the slave.
O'ermastering sense of fellowship with those

Chained by the bonds men thought legitimate;
Thou wept at slavery, sought to disclose
Its inhumanity, so desolate.

The lifting of the seal of servitude
Was fair releasement for the sons of toil
Too slowly nurtured by the customs crude
To rise to greatness, bound unto the soil.

The sacred rights of personality
Throw out the challenge for true liberty.
Raised from his bed of helplessness—captive
Of all the ages—there to walk and live.

The higher Leadership

There is a leadership, creative, rare,
That moves the slumbering nature to retrieve
Its hours of idleness, and to prepare
A fitting temple 'gainst the twilight's eve.
It calls forth to achievement, throws aside
The guilty creepings of ambition's trail,
And veers the compass, pointed by our pride,
To guide unerringly, though darts assail.
It bars the door 'gainst memory's selfish wiles,
And more and more fights silent and alone;
Unmoved at last by flattery that beguiles
The weakling, hearing not the deeper tone.
This leadership was Lincoln's and its vein
Lent strength to every talent of his aids;
Grant, Seward, Stanton, Chase, and Welles attained
Historic greatness, fearing not time's shades.

The leadership of old drove to its end
Bearing its virtues in its power to rend;
No people's voice thundered its sacred cause
Until democracy, wrought out its laws.

Gettysburg

The field of Gettysburg – ground consecrate
To efforts superhuman and unmatched,
To deeds of loyal valor born of great
Resolvements and to unborn loves attached –
Held mighty host as Lincoln rose to view,
A President, a nation's father now,
Whose heart in silence measured grief it knew,
A grief fine words seemed illy to avow.
The memories of that battle surged his brain
And forced the breaking of a deep drawn sigh
More eloquent than language to explain
Those deeds that time will ever glorify.
His words so brief, yet placed immortal wreath
Upon the sufferers 'neath that scorching fire,
The heirs of whom must always walk beneath
The guidance of the truth – such deeds inspire.
The battle's menace darked the universe,
But sanguine victory shattered slavery's curse :
The sacrifice appalled a blood-bought world,
Hastening the day all battle flags are furled.

Death of Lincoln

Fourth anniversary of Sumter's fall,
The brightest day when hopes of peace revived :
The saddest night a nation could recall,
Its Lincoln dead, its heaven of light deprived !
Swift settled o'er this land a heavy pall,
While grim and tear stained faces groped for naught
That lay within man's power, now trivial,
To give, when fell the best he ever wrought.
Palsied with grief and awed with fear men sank,
Not otherwise than victims in a flood,
That bursting o'er the ill-restraining bank
Strewed earth's fair green with wreckage and with blood.
In every household where loved Lincoln reigned,
There was the bitter funereal grief ;
Subdued was every tone, all joy enchained,
While misery cleft deep in man's belief.
'Twas in his years of service, through his deeds,
That we knew Lincoln, loved his simple creeds ;
Drank from his soul of richness, national power
Sufficient unto rising 'bove death's awful hour.

The Waste of Passion

Assassination marked the climax grim
Of evils crusting o'er the nation's form,
And smote the heart of mercy—tore from him
The right to edge with silver—clouds of storm.
Doubt not the leaden messenger of death
Eclipsed a beacon of new dawning peace;
Blurred deep the people's vision, and their faith,
With passion urging passion to increase.
What meaning to life's span of consciousness,
If at its strongest hour its doom is marked!
What purpose, that a nation choose, possess
Great leaders when on fearful war embarked!
Where lies the logic of a man's stern fight
If hopes and visions lead but to the cross!
Why strives a nation mightily for right,
If final contest brings but dire pathos!
All killing is confession that we learn
Impatiently—nor higher things discern:
All meanings that we search for fail us when
Our passions rise as cloud-banks round our ken.

Our human Loss

Could his redeeming presence still have fed
His day, hushing opinion's direful waste,
Shaping war's sharp reactions, that o'erspread
The nation's temper through its fretful haste;
His human thinking, so uncritical,
Yet seeing deep our needs and weaknesses,
Would surely have swept chords, innumerable,
And made of wounds new budding victories.
A Lincoln dead, no other fills his place
Or adequately soothes the frenzied mind,
That does anew seek rudely to efface
Those master lines of statecraft, wisdom twined.
Love's fond immediacy resents a change
Of object, and its virtues positive
Slip quickly to negation's practice strange,
And men arise whose lives have naught to give.
Earth's leadership comes not with puny skill
Of man to warp, manipulate at will
The rights of fellow man, 'tis as the sun
That through all time creatively its work has done.

Part three
The Achieving Spirit

Personal Significance

The personality of manhood lies
In showing unto others, what is theirs;
It is the chord once struck, brings joys or sighs,
To some 'tis wheat, to many only tares.
O Lincoln, Lincoln, tender, brave, and true,
Thy love does make more beautiful, sublime,
Each lowly human effort to subdue
Life's errors and the habit of dread crime.
The mystery of thy sympathy weaves fast
The garment covering o'er the scars of sin;
While to the world thy agency looms vast
With pregnant sources for the life within.
The greater life of vision belts the globe,
From zenith to horizon it doth probe.

The Torch of Permanence

Thy personality doth prompt in all
Emotions full and richer for thine own;
Thy soul of goodness bursts prophetical,
Upon the soul life, in its world unknown:
It lifts the burdens that so agonize,
Bringing to bearer message of relief;
It calls upon the nations to arise,
And bear the burdens—still the heart of grief.
Soon will there come unto all lands just peace,
Soon whisperings of the dawn of brighter days;
Soon joys will rise for thought of pain's surcease,
And wars will lesser vaunt their cruel displays.

The gift of life is endless power to mould
Man's spirit, and his best to help unfold.

The Power of Love

And how he loved, who bore for us so much
 Of life's deep sorrow, and the martyr's crown!
To hearts of men and women came a touch
 Of human kindness, all their hate to drown.
He taught us much, who did his work so well
 That we have grown more like him, e'en shall grow,
As through succeeding ages weaves the spell
 Of spirit upon spirit here below.
The character of Lincoln rests secure
 With Washington's, eternally enshrined;
Twin forces ever seeking to allure
 To walks of justice – with fair peace entwined.
The North and South now strive to multiply
 The bonds of union – with love's strongest tie.

The higher Thinking

Lincoln was master of the common lore,
And easily ascended wisdom's plane;
Bore in himself the thought to first restore
The Union and its limits to maintain.
Wisdom again shone o'er his war time acts,
And prompted to a sure ingathering trust
That Lincoln's heart and brain knew best the facts,
Knew how to guide, control, and be most just.
Wisdom—that higher thinking of the soul—
Alone gives basis for the soul's delight;
Wisdom—'tis more than learning's aureole—
'Tis common knowledge grafted with foresight.
Who clings to fundamentals—bears the cross,
But through his wisdom sanctifies all loss.

The Torch of Power

No gold nor earthly gewgaws dimmed the glance
That probed behind man's lean and selfish life;
No prize of power transcendent, turned the lance
That pricked unerringly the ills of strife.
Back to the past, then up the steep ascent
Of daily life, he traced his weary rise,
Communing with the God omnipotent,
And earth streamed with the faith of sacrifice.
The soul that reaches back to lowly trails
As duty flings its issues on the brain,
Unearths a mint and cummin that avails
As daily altar where God's fires obtain.
- Unfolding laws sometimes bind earth and skies,
And man finds the eternal, ere he dies.

Fortitude

Thy fortitude in shouldering each defeat,
And courage when adversity bore near,
Showed forth a nature practical-concrete,
Which loses naught with minglings of dread fear.
Thou coped with every ill that threatened harm;
Thou warred with every rumor of disgrace:
Thy being rose with sternness to disarm
Those minions, self-appointed, treacherous, base.
The times vouchsafed no virtuous clemency,
Nor wafted to thy spirit fragrant hours,
But doomed thy life with dread calamity,
Testing the height and depth of human powers.
When fortitude seems greatest, there is love
That delves the deepest, soars to heavens above.

The Voice of Relief

Humor is active, wisdom's instrument,
And played with kind insinuating grace,
Falls as the dew, not as the rain's torrent,
Lifting to keen delight—the commonplace.
It turns aside the stinging darts of foes,
Through understanding of their origin;
It brings to human suffering ease of woes,
From feeling joy as sorrow's nearest kin.
Thy spirit's humor—gift of God to thee—
Brought to thy life an agency divine,
That more and more in full and high degree,
Served usefully thy deeds to interline.

Humor enables us to see ahead,
Though fierce the breakers o'er the way we tread.

The higher Living

Thy patience, all enduring, did supplant
The weary wastes of passion's wild despair,
And overturn the ill advice and cant
Flowing relentlessly, man's will to snare.
It bore thee past all insults grave,
Springing from lips through ignorance or guile;
It carried thy kind heart, that ills forgave,
To sterner deeds, as fallen times defile.
Thy patience, like the flakes of falling snow,
Unconsciously sifts o'er the people's heart,
Adding a purity that does bestow
A cleaner footing and a nobler part.
Thy voice to us does speak – does patience urge,
That wisdom's ways may common ills submerge.

The Crown of Life

The alabaster box of ointment spreads
Its precious contents o'er the Master's feet,
While Mary, in true humbleness that sheds
 Its rays of glory o'er all time complete,
Dries with her hair, and hears the Master's tones
 Blessing the giver and the gift of love:
So Lincoln bears a soul that ne'er disdains
 The way of service for his God above;
All ways turned upward in that simple rule
 Scaling to heights no monarch ever knew,
Turning the shafts of sharpest ridicule
 To perfumed laws 'neath flails, thought to subdue.
 The truest human spirit does explore
 Unto the heart of man—its boundless lore.

The Nation's Seer

The tall and stately pine-tree rears aloft
Its needle-pointed vestments, bears its sway,
As prophet o'er a wilderness, and oft
Tells to the ear attuned, of storms that play.
So rose our Lincoln to his lonely view
Above the hill tops springing from the plain;
Then saw he far beyond, and through and through,
As earth-contact thrilled messages of pain.
A man, our very own, to earth so near,
So simple in his heartfelt tenderness,
Yet with a vision, piercing heights, a seer,
Tracing the storm clouds and the war's duress.
Seems human life a vain and worthless thing
Attuned by Lincoln to love's deathless spring!







